

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their heart May 2024

Train up a child

By Steve Huston



Proverbs, in general, is a training manual for child-rearing. Therefore, every Christian father and mother should become very familiar with its admonitions, exhortations, and warnings. As adorable and cuddly as our babies and children are, we must never forget that their hearts are born sinful and it is the distinct God-given duty of parents to raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

One day, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) – English poet, philosopher, and theologian – was talking to his friend John Thalwell - radical British orator, writer, political reformer. As the two men stood by a window, Thalwell expressed his opinion that it was very unfair to influence a child's mind. Here's how he put it: "by inculcating any

opinions before they had come to years of discretion to choose for themselves."

Coleridge responded to his friend by way of illustration. Pointing to his weed-filled garden outside the window, he told Thalwell, "Look, this is my botanical garden." The British orator, in surprise, said, "What are you talking about? It's covered with weeds."

"Oh," Coleridge replied, "that's only because it's not yet come to its age of discretion. The weeds, you see, have taken the liberty to grow and I thought it was unfair of me to prejudice the soil toward roses and strawberries."

When we are tempted to disengage (even for a moment) from the struggle of childrearing, let us remember that a child left to himself grows weeds not roses. Let us also remember the warning of puritan William Gurnall: "Faith will not grow without planting, and will die even where it is planted

unless it is watered and fertilized with the Word of God." And, "Training your children up in the ways of the Lord is no casual suggestion. Your refusal to obey, whether the product of deliberation or neglect, will pay you bitter wages when you stand before the King of kings in the judgment."

The Puritans, having a deep love for God and an ardent love for their fellowman, had much to say which was intended to press parents into the duty of godly instruction upon their children. Indeed, the Bible has much to say in exhortation and warning on this same topic, both in precept and example. Perhaps the best known of these verses would be: "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6) We're warned that "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (Prov. 13:24)

Thomas Case reminds us that training is more than

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org
Encouraging Christians to guard their heart May 2024

Train up a child

By Steve Huston



Proverbs, in general, is a training manual for child-rearing. Therefore, every Christian father and mother should become very familiar with its admonitions, exhortations, and warnings. As adorable and cuddly as our babies and children are, we must never forget that their hearts are born sinful and it is the distinct God-given duty of parents to raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

One day, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) – English poet, philosopher, and theologian – was talking to his friend John Thalwell - radical British orator, writer, political reformer. As the two men stood by a window, Thalwell expressed his opinion that it was very unfair to influence a child's mind. Here's how he put it: "by inculcating any

opinions before they had come to years of discretion to choose for themselves."

Coleridge responded to his friend by way of illustration. Pointing to his weed-filled garden outside the window, he told Thalwell, "Look, this is my botanical garden." The British orator, in surprise, said, "What are you talking about? It's covered with weeds."

"Oh," Coleridge replied, "that's only because it's not yet come to its age of discretion. The weeds, you see, have taken the liberty to grow and I thought it was unfair of me to prejudice the soil toward roses and strawberries."

When we are tempted to disengage (even for a moment) from the struggle of childrearing, let us remember that a child left to himself grows weeds not roses. Let us also remember the warning of puritan William Gurnall: "Faith will not grow without planting, and will die even where it is planted

unless it is watered and fertilized with the Word of God." And, "Training your children up in the ways of the Lord is no casual suggestion. Your refusal to obey, whether the product of deliberation or neglect, will pay you bitter wages when you stand before the King of kings in the judgment."

The Puritans, having a deep love for God and an ardent love for their fellowman, had much to say which was intended to press parents into the duty of godly instruction upon their children. Indeed, the Bible has much to say in exhortation and warning on this same topic, both in precept and example. Perhaps the best known of these verses would be: "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6) We're warned that "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." (Prov. 13:24)

Thomas Case reminds us that training is more than



mere corporal punishment; it must include godly instruction:

“The sum is this, that while we chasten the flesh, we should labor to inform and form the mind and spirit by infusing right principles, pressing and urging upon their tender hearts counsel, reproof, and instruction, as the matter requires. This is the duty of parents, to imitate God, to let instruction expound correction; and with a rod in the hand and a word in the mouth, to train up their children to life eternal. A dumb [mute] rod is but a brutish discipline and will certainly leave them more brutish than it found them. Chastisement without teaching may sooner break the bones than the heart; it may mortify the flesh but not corruption; extinguish nature but never beget grace. ‘But the rod and reproof give wisdom.’ Instruction added to correction, as it makes excellent Christians, so it makes good children.”

Dear Reader, even as our loving heavenly Father disciplines, so must we do so with our children. Neither should be done out of frustration nor anger, remembering that there is a definite difference between discipline and abuse.

After all the training is done to the best of one’s ability, it must still be left in God’s hand. As Si-meon Ashe well lays out the truths of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, we read: “Though to see [the rebellious child] undutiful is your grief, yet not always your sin. Hath a parent given the child not only the milk of the breast but the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2)? Hast thou seasoned his tender years with religious education? Thou canst do no more. Parents can only work knowledge; God must work grace. They can only lay the wood together; it is God must make it burn. A parent can only be a guide to show his child the way to heaven; the Spirit of God must be a lodestone to draw his heart into that way.”

For this reason, we under-

stand that regardless of our much training, our diligent and fervent prayers for our children must be much more, not only through their childhood but into their adult years as well. Take heart godly father and godly mother, I leave you with the words of Edward Reyner: “Parents’ prayers may prove their children’s best portion, even a treasure laid up in heaven for them which may obtain of God many blessings for the children after the parents are dead and gone. Children of many prayers seldom miscarry.” And John Flavel gives us beautiful words along these lines as well: “Though we die, our prayers do not die with us. They outlive us, and those we leave behind us in the world may reap the benefit of them when we are turned to dust.”

Your children are first and foremost souls and God expects you to nourish them spiritually first, and physically second. They will either be taught by you to love their Creator with all that they are or the world will teach them to hate God and the holiness He requires.



mere corporal punishment; it must include godly instruction:

“The sum is this, that while we chasten the flesh, we should labor to inform and form the mind and spirit by infusing right principles, pressing and urging upon their tender hearts counsel, reproof, and instruction, as the matter requires. This is the duty of parents, to imitate God, to let instruction expound correction; and with a rod in the hand and a word in the mouth, to train up their children to life eternal. A dumb [mute] rod is but a brutish discipline and will certainly leave them more brutish than it found them. Chastisement without teaching may sooner break the bones than the heart; it may mortify the flesh but not corruption; extinguish nature but never beget grace. ‘But the rod and reproof give wisdom.’ Instruction added to correction, as it makes excellent Christians, so it makes good children.”

Dear Reader, even as our loving heavenly Father disciplines, so must we do so with our children. Neither should be done out of frustration nor anger, remembering that there is a definite difference between discipline and abuse.

After all the training is done to the best of one’s ability, it must still be left in God’s hand. As Si-meon Ashe well lays out the truths of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility, we read: “Though to see [the rebellious child] undutiful is your grief, yet not always your sin. Hath a parent given the child not only the milk of the breast but the sincere milk of the word (1 Peter 2:2)? Hast thou seasoned his tender years with religious education? Thou canst do no more. Parents can only work knowledge; God must work grace. They can only lay the wood together; it is God must make it burn. A parent can only be a guide to show his child the way to heaven; the Spirit of God must be a lodestone to draw his heart into that way.”

For this reason, we under-

stand that regardless of our much training, our diligent and fervent prayers for our children must be much more, not only through their childhood but into their adult years as well. Take heart godly father and godly mother, I leave you with the words of Edward Reyner: “Parents’ prayers may prove their children’s best portion, even a treasure laid up in heaven for them which may obtain of God many blessings for the children after the parents are dead and gone. Children of many prayers seldom miscarry.” And John Flavel gives us beautiful words along these lines as well: “Though we die, our prayers do not die with us. They outlive us, and those we leave behind us in the world may reap the benefit of them when we are turned to dust.”

Your children are first and foremost souls and God expects you to nourish them spiritually first, and physically second. They will either be taught by you to love their Creator with all that they are or the world will teach them to hate God and the holiness He requires.